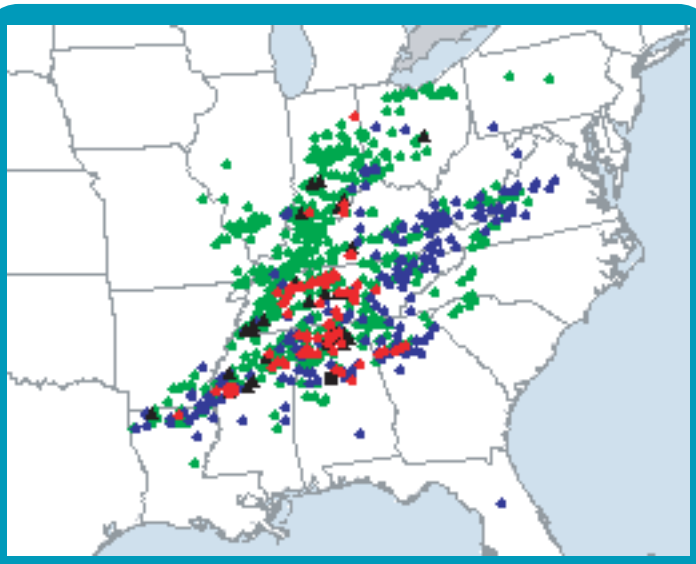
As the event unfolded on that Friday, supercell thunderstorms began to erupt rapidly across western Tennessee and Kentucky during the late morning hours. Several of these supercells continued to gain strength and wind energy as they tracked across the Nashville metropolitan area by early afternoon. Storms were slower to develop across Alabama because a warm layer of air at approximately 5000 feet above the ground, commonly referred to as a thermal inversion or cap, limited the growth of thunderstorms. As moisture increased during the late afternoon and the upper level storm system brought cooler temperatures to the layer above the surface, this inversion began to erode.



Total storm reports from the Storm Prediction Center from April 7, 2006. Green dots indicate hail reports; blue indicates wind; red indicates tornadoes.

Thunderstorms developed across northern Mississippi around 4 PM Friday afternoon, and quickly became severe. The first tornadic supercell moved into northwest Alabama around 5 PM, producing a brief tornado touchdown near Cherokee in Colbert County. This proved to be only the beginning of a long night across Alabama. Supercells, some of which were long-lived, pushed across the state, affecting many metropolitan areas. The last tornado touched down near Childersburg at 2:03 AM. The storms continued to move southeastward, producing large hail as far south as Dale and Geneva counties in southeast Alabama Saturday afternoon.

Twenty-three tornadoes occurred across Alabama on April 7th and 8th. Thirteen of these were rated EF0; ten were EF1 intensity. There were also dozens of damaging straight-line wind and large hail reports. Golf ball-sized hail, or larger, was reported many times to weather service offices. Even softball-sized hail was reported in Marshall and Morgan counties. Dozens of businesses and homes were damaged, some severely, and hundreds of trees snapped or uprooted. Several area high schools received damage to their outdoor athletic facilities and building roofs. Unfortunately, this storm system was responsible for several weather related injuries and one fatality, all due to falling trees. Timely warnings and prompt actions taken by emergency management and the public worked together to limit the number of injuries and fatalities, during this overnight, particularly dangerous storm system.

Roebuck (Jefferson Co.)
Photo Courtesy of Tim Coleman

Ohatchee (Calhoun Co.)

Huntsville (Madison Co.)